

More Families Receiving Access to High Quality Early Childhood Centers

Governor celebrates first year of pilot program that continues state's progress

Dover, DE – A federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant is helping Delaware build upon the state's record investments in high-quality early learning and raise the quality of infant and toddler care for children in low-income families. Delaware was one of only seven states to win the grant.

Governor Jack Markell today celebrated the first-year progress of the pilot program funded by the grant with a visit to the Parents and Children Together at Tech United Cerebral Palsy of Delaware (PACTT) child care center at Sussex Technical High School in Georgetown. The state is receiving more than \$7 million over the five years of the grant.

[\(More information on the state's progress in early childhood is available at this link and below.\)](#)

Joined by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development for the Administration of Children and Families Linda K. Smith, Governor Markell said that the initiative exemplifies how Delaware and the Obama Administration's historic investments in early learning are being leveraged to make immediate and lasting change in the lives of the state's most vulnerable children and their families.

"Research shows that 85 percent of a child's brain is fully developed by age three underscoring the impact stable, nurturing, high-quality early learning has on toddlers and

infants, including their success in school and in life,” said Markell, who has worked with the General Assembly to allocate significant additional resources to early learning since 2012, including recommending \$11.3 in his FY 2017 budget to continue the state’s progress in raising the quality of early learning for its youngest citizens. “I applaud the PACTT center and all the programs that have voluntarily stepped up to meet higher standards of Delaware Stars and Early Head Start to support young children and families.”

The Early Head Start-Child Care partnership integrates the financial and program support of three programs – Delaware Stars, federal Early Head Start, and Delaware’s Purchase of Care program – to raise the quality of infant and toddler child care with more stabilized funding and by paying for teacher education, while also providing infant-toddler classroom materials and playground equipment.

In addition, the program provides wraparound health and parent services for children in low-income families, such as developmental, nutrition and dental assessments, referrals to services, home visits and help accessing housing, food and job supports.

The pilot is supporting children from birth to age 3 years and their families, who are being served in 3-, 4- and 5-Star-rated programs in target areas within City of Wilmington, Kent County and western Sussex County, where the state’s quality early learning needs are greatest. Delaware’s Departments of Education and Health and Social Services are partnering to support the effort.

PACTT, a 5-Star program in Delaware Stars, is one of seven early learning programs in all three counties participating in the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership pilot initiative across the state.

“I really do not know where to begin when asked about how my

program – but most importantly our children and families have benefitted by being part of Delaware Stars and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership,” said Kathy Moore, PACTT administrator. “I’m so grateful and proud to be a part of Stars and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, and I hope that with this support our program and others across the state will continue to grow and exhibit a high standard of early care and education for all children and families.”

Delaware’s Progress on Providing Quality Early Learning Opportunities

Leading economists agree that high-quality early learning helps level the playing field for children from lower-income families on vocabulary and on social and emotional development, and brings significant returns on investment to the public.

Over the past five years, Delaware has made significant progress in raising the quality of early learning by investing in increased professional development for early learning staff, onsite support and classroom materials for early learning programs, and developmental screenings and mental health consultants to detect and address physical and mental health issues early. This effort has led to:

- More than 70 percent of low-income children receiving Purchase of Care now served in highly rated Stars programs – up from just 5 percent in 2011.
- More than 120 programs receiving the highest rating of 5 Stars, up from just 24 in 2012
- More than 200 teachers per year pursuing college degrees and certificates thanks to the TEACH scholarship program
- Since 2011, more than 20,000 children per year receiving developmental screenings and more than 2,400 children receiving intensive Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services